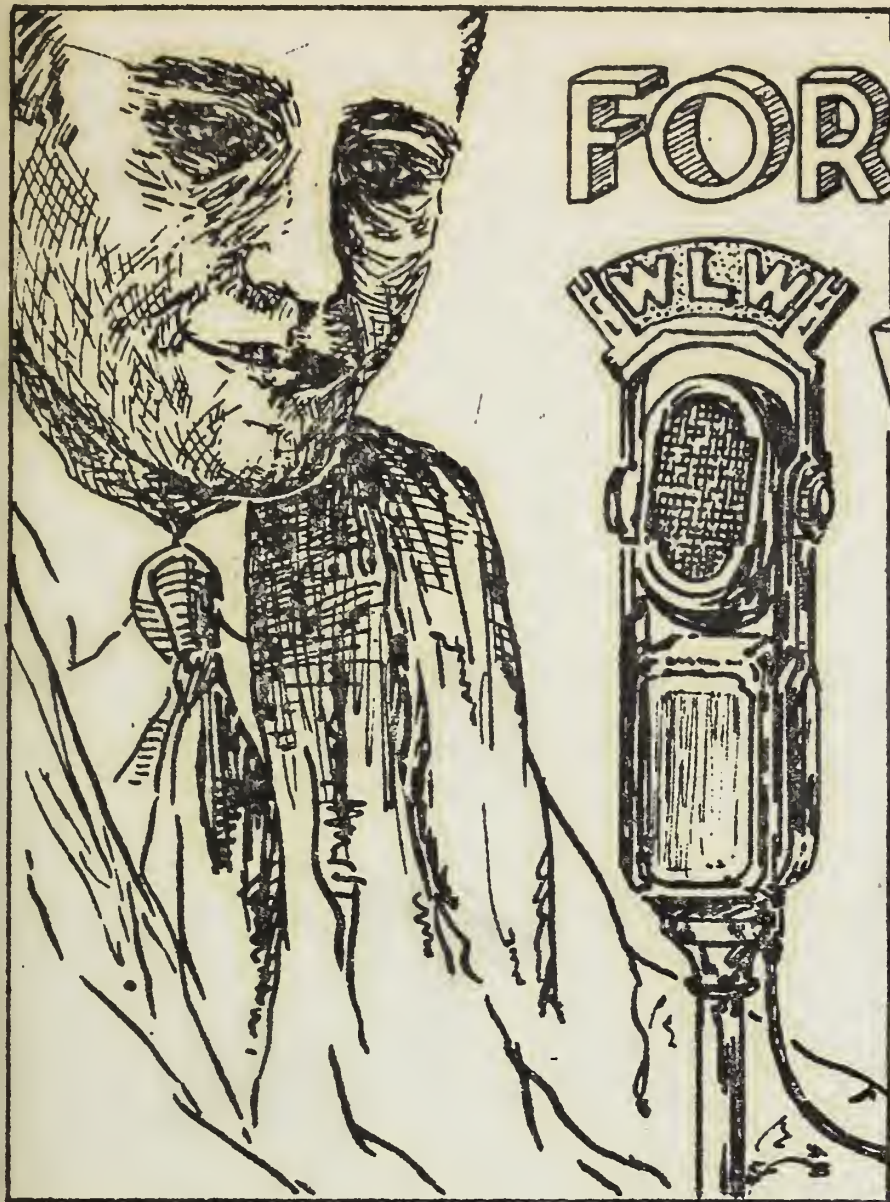


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FORTUNES WASHED AWAY

A Series of
Dramatizations
of Better
Land Use

No. 133 November 9, 1940 1:15 p.m.

"JOHN SLATER, FOREST FARMER"

W·L·W CINCINNATI

United States Department of Agriculture
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To the U.S. &
Department of
Justice
Washington, D.C.

to the U.S. &
Department of
Justice

SOUND: Whistling wind...

VOICE

Guard these trees, my son. Manage them, use them carefully, and they will be your servant. But manage them carefully.

SECOND VOICE

I will, father.

VOICE

I am glad, my son. For these are friendly trees. They are the friend of man.

SOUND: Whistling wind...

ANNOUNCER

John Slater, Forest Farmer...133rd episode of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

ANNOUNCER

The towering Alps look down upon Bavaria, in the basin of the Danube. Here is a land where rivers rush through the wooded hills. Fields of waving corn and green meadows creep up to the mountain-side, and on the crest of the hills dark forests hang like dense, dark caps. Here is a land of rye, oats, wheat, barley, vines -- and a land of forests. Forests have played an important part in moulding the life of the men of Bavaria.

SOUND: Buzz saw behind...

NARRATOR

Muskegon County, Michigan, had trees like those, once. Not the great mountains, but trees. Friendly trees, trees that gave Muskegon County prosperity. They are gone.

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ANNOUNCER

This is the story of John Slater, who worked in the forest of Bavaria, who came to Muskegon County a long, long time ago, and who knows how to manage the trees he loves...

SLATER

Oh, my son...there is so much you don't know about farming.

SON (bristling)

I do so! After all the lessons you've given me...

SLATER

It takes time. Ah, you should have seen me when I came to America. I wanted to farm. I wanted to go to Iowa, or Wisconsin. I worked for a lumber yard, worked for a railroad...building a grade to Fremont. But all the time I was sick for the forests of Bavaria. Trees can be very friendly, my son.

SON

I know, father. And as I have told you so many times, I will try to carry out your wishes for the woodland. I have seen how much of this country has been logged off.

SLATER

Logged off...burned and wasted. Ours is the only piece of virgin forest I know. Always, I have been careful with it. Remember, John...even when you were a little boy growing up we kept the fire from it...

SON (laughing)

And how we chased the neighbors' cows out. (THEN SERIOUSLY)
Father, don't you think we should put up a fence to keep them out?

SLATER

Oho! You are learning. Yes, livestock and woods don't go together I know that from my lessons in Bavaria...lessons my father taught me.

SOUND: Buzz saw behind...

ANNOUNCER

Muskegon County looks over Lake Michigan. But it also looks over vast shifting sand dunes, sand that creeps upon farms, gnaws at comfortable summer resorts, sand that has buried villages...sand... sand.

NARRATOR

But trees are friendly.

ORGAN: BLUE DANUBE WALTZ behind...

NARRATOR

Down from the Black Forest, down from Ulm to Passau, flows the Blue Danube. But the Blue Danube is not blue, for it is sluggish, yellow-brown, water rolling between two banks. But Bavaria's forests did not give that river its color--for forests hold that soil!

ORGAN: Out sharply.

SLATER

Now this tree, I've known it since it was no bigger than a sapling. I hope it is not harvested as long as I am alive -- it would be like chopping down an old friend.

SON

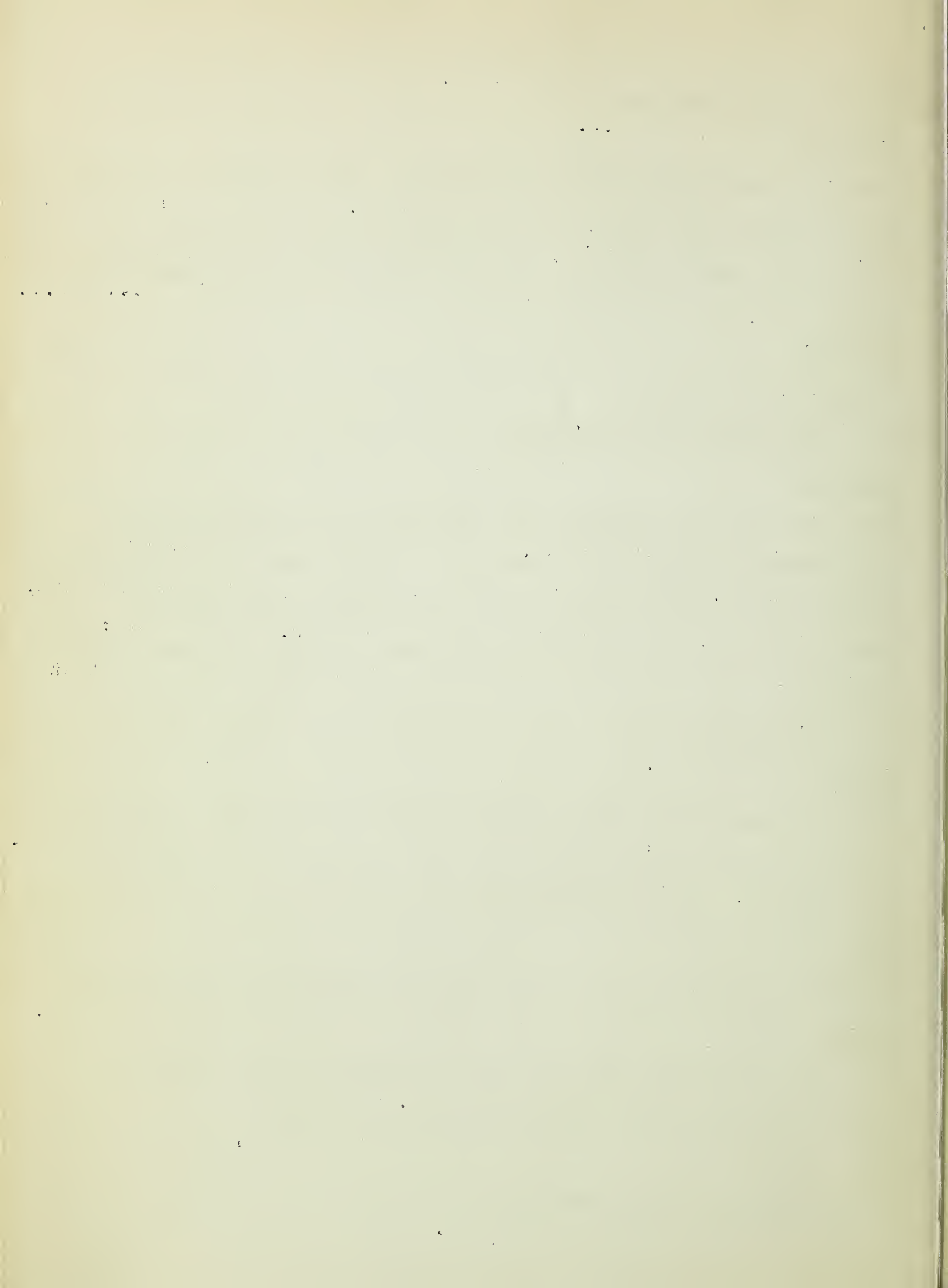
I know what you mean, for I have played by this tree, many times.

SLATER

And that great white oak over there, I remember when it was no bigger than your head -- and not nearly so thick.

SON

It will be good for our new barn.



SLATER

So it will. It will make a good stringer for the loft. But remember what I tell you about harvesting a woods -- cut out the big trees, the mature ones.

SON

And cut the ones that are crowding out the younger trees.

SLATER

Yes, managing a forest is like managing a garden. You must know each tree almost. You must pull out the weeds, you might say. Take out the ones that are ripe and mature.

SON

And I think we will have to plant some new trees, too, where the cyclone twisted them.

SLATER

It pleases me you said that. Now I know you are going to be a good manager of my woods. And while they are growing, thin and trim them. Remove the crooked ones. Ach, yah, keeping a woodlands here in America is a business for -- like a fussy old man -- but some day this country will wish it had more fussy old men like John Slater.

SOUND: Buzz saw behind...

ANNOUNCER

No desert waste land is the teeming west coast of Michigan, but its trees are gone. Gone are the giants of the forest, gone the mighty pines that built Muskegon County. Now shifting sands move with every breeze!

NARRATOR

But we can bring them back.

[illegible]

—

ORGAN: BLUE DANUBE WALTZ behind...

NARRATOR

Trees gave beauty to Bavaria, trees give it prosperity. Well I remember Oberammorgau, perched on green slopes that gradually develop into the beautiful highland valleys of the Ammergebirge. The air is pure and bracing, a tonic to tired nerves. It is a land of beautiful forests and emerald green meadows.

ORGAN: Out sharply.

SON (Now grown to manhood)

It was just 40 years ago when my father was talking to me here on this same spot -- telling me how to take care of the woods.

JOHN

I can learn too, father. I'll be the third generation of John Slaters to guard these woods and keep them growing and producing our lumber, for houses and barns, our firewood...

SON

When you have worked this little forest as long as I have, my son, you will know there are many other benefits.

JOHN

What others?

SON

We have built three great barns from this woodlot. We have sold thousands of dollars worth of lumber and cordwood. And we have heated our houses these many years -- yours and mine and your sister, Mary's.

JOHN

But you said other benefits.

1. The first part of the report is a summary of the work done during the year.

2. The second part is a detailed account of the work done during the year.

3. The third part is a summary of the work done during the year.

4. The fourth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

5. The fifth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

6. The sixth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

7. The seventh part is a summary of the work done during the year.

8. The eighth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

9. The ninth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

10. The tenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

11. The eleventh part is a summary of the work done during the year.

12. The twelfth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

13. The thirteenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

14. The fourteenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

15. The fifteenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

16. The sixteenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

17. The seventeenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

18. The eighteenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

19. The nineteenth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

20. The twentieth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

21. The twenty-first part is a summary of the work done during the year.

22. The twenty-second part is a summary of the work done during the year.

23. The twenty-third part is a summary of the work done during the year.

24. The twenty-fourth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

25. The twenty-fifth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

26. The twenty-sixth part is a summary of the work done during the year.

27. The twenty-seventh part is a summary of the work done during the year.

SON

Yes, John. And the best of those other benefits is this: this woodlot is my hobby. Some folks may not think much of it -- they are too busy with other things. But I enjoy working in these woods and it pays us well, besides.

JOHN

Does it pay as much as corn and wheat?

SON

Maybe yes, maybe no. Let me tell you something. Look at these little seedling trees under our feet.

JOHN

Sugar maples.

SON

Yes, you are knowing your trees, John. Now, if you work with these trees and manage them right, trim them when they need it -- just so, see...if you do that, they will grow strong and straight. Like the big ones, see? They are just like boys on the farm, if you keep them busy...

JOHN

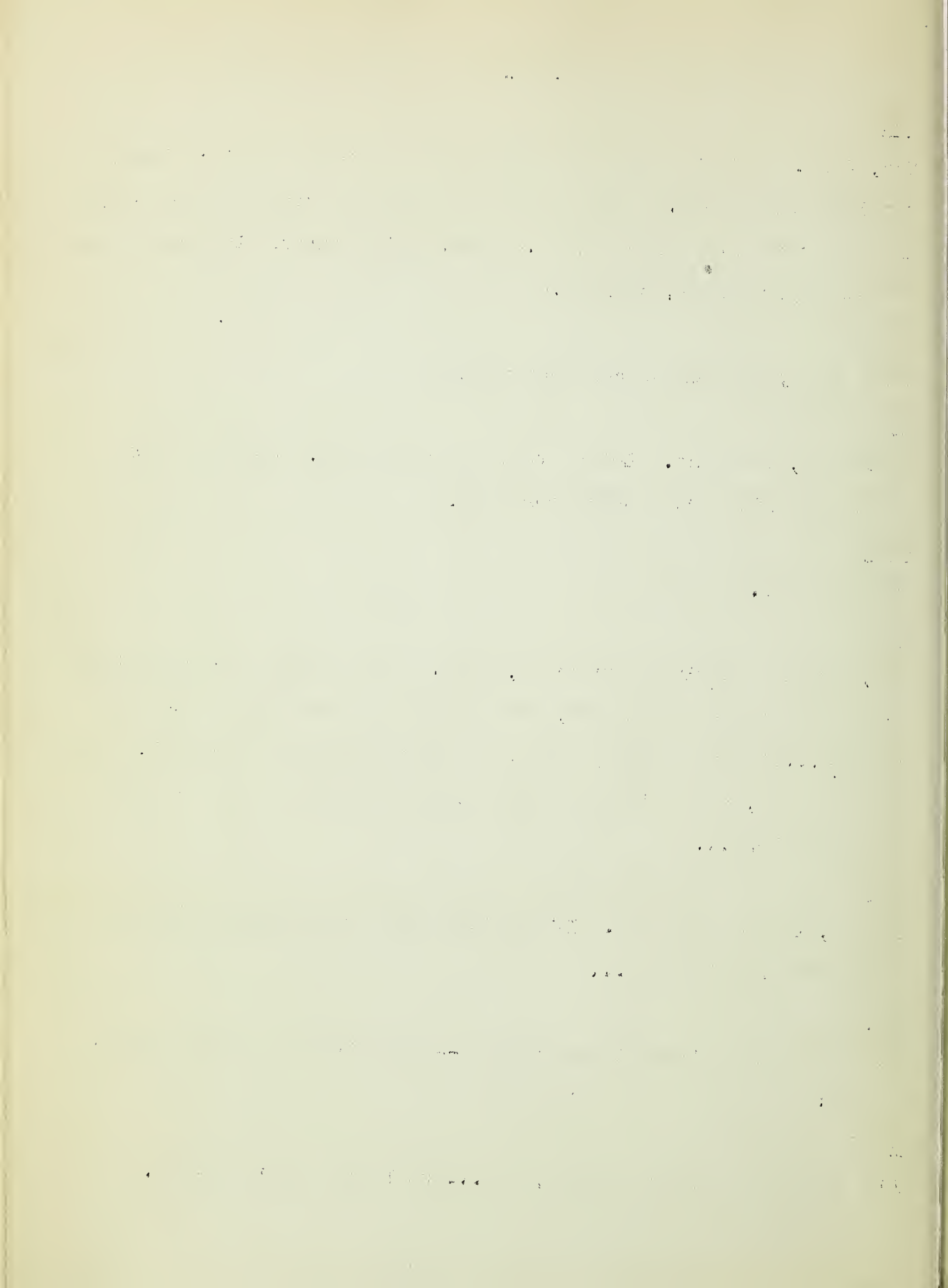
Oh yes, I know that one. If you keep them busy hauling wood and maybe tending the cows...

SON

They will grow straight and useful -- just like the little sugar maples.

JOHN

I've heard that story before, dad...but I know you're right.



SON

Sure, I know...no one can say John Slater hasn't brought up his boys good. I'm proud of them all -- you, and Joseph and Lawrence and Bernard. And the two little fellows, Lewis and Paul.

JOHN

And Mary, too.

SON

Sure, and Mary. I'm proud of you all.

JOHN

Well, I hope all of your children will do as well as you've done. We'll take care of this woods, father. It will stand long after you're gone. It will be your monument.

ORGAN: Sneak in BLUE DANUBE WALTZ.

SON

Nothing you could have said would please me more, son. I have heard my own father talk of the thick beech forests of Bavaria... in autumn the woods are resplendent with all shades from yellow to dark red, the mist of the November mornings lingers over the valleys. Michigan once had fine woods, John. You, and I, and your children, must work to bring them back. Then we will have an abundance that will live forever.

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

ANNOUNCER

That is the true story of three generations of John Slaters, and a 40-acre grove of virgin woods. And now, once again we turn to the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture, and here is Gene Charles.

CHARLES

Thanks, _____. And that woods still stands in the midst of Muskogon County's fine corn and wheat fields, surrounded by big red barns and white houses, herds of dairy cows, and endless patches of cut-over, sadly neglected woodland. John Slater's woodlot stands out, like a sentinel, in a land where second-growth timber, poorly managed, survives as a monument to the careless woodman's destructive ax. Well, maybe we've painted the picture a bit too gloomy. Muskogon County farmers are fighting back and I mean they are fighting back. For one thing, County Agricultural Agent Carl Knopf has a reforestation program that has already brought results. For another, the farmers have organized two soil conservation districts to conserve their soil...and Pete Tullis, more formally Wilbur R. Tullis, knows something about that. Pete is the conservationist from the North Muskogon soil conservation district, and I have a sneaking suspicion that he's ready to tell us more about the Slater farm. Pete?

TULLIS

For one thing, Gene, the Slaters have been harvesting sawlogs and firewood from that 40-acre tract for at least 75 years.

CHARLES

Seventy-five years is a long time.

TULLIS

I know -- not that I'm that old, understand -- but here is a good way to prove it. Let's say we drive out here in the country around Cincinnati, any direction you want to go, and look at the land. You see signs of soil erosion -- gullies, sheet erosion, abandoned fields.

CHARLES

I hate to admit it but I guess it's too obviously true. Now, just for the sake of state pride, remember you could see the same thing if you drove around over Muskegon County, Michigan.

TULLIS

I'll have to grant that. Now, what's happened? Much of the land has been worn out by constant farming, with no attention given to holding the soil or maintaining its fertility.

CHARLES

Not the land under John Slater's woods. The soil there is as good as it ever was.

TULLIS

You're wrong there, Charles. The soil there is better than it was 75 years ago. And here's why: The Slaters have drained it, so now they have a greater variety of valuable trees growing than were growing there three-quarters of a century ago. And that isn't all. They have been taking an annual harvest out of that farm woodlot for 75 years and yet--this is the point: their timber inventory has remained constant, if not actually increased--because of selection cutting and proper management.

CHARLES

That makes two awfully good arguments, Pete. The soil is better and the woods is better. Not many cash-grain farmers could say that after farming the same land for 50 or 75 years.

TULLIS

Here are some other things about the Slater woods that are worth noting. They fenced that woodlot more than 40 years ago, the two older John Slaters splitting logs for the rail fence. And this is a curious fact, they fenced it to keep out their neighbors' cattle, not their own.

CHARLES

Old John Slater, the First, knew that was a good practice -- half a century ago.

TULLIS

He knew another prime woodlot principle -- always keep the dead stuff cleaned up. A few years ago a cyclone ripped through this woodlot. It broke many trees down. But the Slaters promptly cleaned up the dead stuff -- that avoids a fire hazard. If lightning strikes a tall tree, down that tree comes and all the brush is trimmed and used. That's why you see great long cords of firewood stacked around the Slater place.

CHARLES

What would you say about correct land use and soil-holding methods, as used by the Slaters?

TULLIS

I can repeat what John Slater, the second, told me the other day. Right near his woods, there is a tract of rather sandy soil. It got to blowing a few years ago, so they hauled heavier clay onto that tract, scattered it as they would fertilizer. They marled the sandy land and put barnyard manure on it -- they keep a herd of more than a hundred cattle. Now, the sandy land that used to suffer from wind erosion, is growing alfalfa and brome grass.



CHARLES

How about the low spots -- any draining necessary?

TULLIS

Oh, yes. Much of their farmland is tile drained. Years ago the Slater farm had numerous low, wet spots on it. Those have all been filled and leveled off, which rather suggests that the Slater boys are pretty hard workers.

CHARLES

Indeed it does. And I know that their work has brought results.

TULLIS

It has...but don't go backing away. I'm not going to give you a long list of statistics, Charles. I could tell you that 85 cubic feet per acre per year is considered a mighty fine growth -- and that the Slaters oldest plot shows a growth of 130 cubic feet per acre -- but those figures won't tell you nearly as much as a personal inspection of the Slater woods. They're fine, Gene -- and they're a tribute to the man who taught his son who taught his son -- that woodland management is a sound investment.

CHARLES

And that's something that more and more farmers are realizing every day...and thanks for being with us, Pete Tullis, conservationist of the North Muskegon, Michigan, soil conservation district

ORGAN THEME: I GET THE BLUES WHEN IT RAINS.

CHARLES (on cue)

This is Gene Charles, speaking for the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture. Goodbye until next week at this same time, when once again we bring you a story of "Fortunes Washed Away."

ORGAN: UP AND OUT.

